

Free

# MetroParent

October 2012 • Blooming in the Portland-Vancouver area

## Hope for Kids with Cancer

*What's New & Promising?*

## On With the Show!

*Our 2012-13 Performing Arts Preview*

## Fall Fun in Pacific City

## October Outings

*Our Extraordinary Family Calendar*

**Halloween & Harvest Guide**



# Angels Among Us

## Albertina Kerr

*Empowering people with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges*

*By Amy Miner, Marketing & Communications Manager, Albertina Kerr*



Albertina Kerr provides a wide range of mental health services for children, including a family resource center, a short-term residential psychiatric crisis care program, and foster care and group homes for youth with special needs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALBERTINA KERR

Like many teens, Jacob is passionate about sports. He plays baseball and is the heart of his high school football team. The Pittsburgh Steelers and Los Angeles Dodgers can count him among their most enthusiastic fans. However, just a few short years ago Jacob wasn't running down the field; he was running away from one foster home after another, toward crisis.

Finally, Jacob found stability and security at one of Oregon's only programs for teens in crisis. Albertina Kerr's short-term residential psychiatric crisis care program provides an alternative to hospitalization for children in need of 24-hour care and access to mental health services.

Once he was stable and ready to move on, Jacob was able to receive the intensive level of care he needed at a group home for youth. He learned how to talk about his concerns instead of using behavior to express his emotions. He learned how to live with other kids and connect with staff members. Over time, Jacob has become an active part of his community – playing sports and gaining job experience at Kerr Bikes, Albertina Kerr's fun bike rental shop at downtown Portland's Waterfront Park.

According to Jacob, "If it wasn't for the staff and the support that I got from them, I would still be running away."

For more than 105 years, Albertina Kerr has stepped up to serve the most vulnerable in our community. Established in 1907 as a shelter for homeless men, the organization soon began offering support for women and families. Alexander Kerr, an early supporter and founder of the Kerr Glass Manufacturing Company, donated his home for use as a nursery when his wife Albertina died in 1913. As the organization grew, the Old Albertina Kerr Nursery Home was built and served as a home for children until 1967. It reopened as the volunteer-run Albertina's Restaurant and Shops in 1980.

As the Fairview Training Center, the state-run institution for people with developmental disabilities, curtailed services in the 1970s, Albertina Kerr stepped in to provide supported living, employment services and life skills training for people with developmental disabilities. Over the decades, our services have evolved to meet community needs and today Albertina Kerr serves children and adults with mental health challenges and developmental disabilities.

Families look to Kerr for a wide range of mental health services for children – from a family resource center where they can find support and

community-based care at home to crisis care or intensive treatment for children and teens with the most intense needs. Kids with special needs also find the support they need in foster care or group homes for youth.

In addition, adults with developmental disabilities find a support system at Albertina Kerr that empowers them to live self-determined lives. Community inclusion programs provide opportunities to participate in the workforce, volunteer and join in community activities. At Albertina Kerr's Art from the Heart, artists work in the studio to create artworks that are then sold in the gallery with the artist receiving 70 percent of each sale.

From the beginning, community-minded volunteers and supporters have ensured that Albertina Kerr was there when children and families needed it most. Hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours were logged taking care of babies, opening and operating the volunteer-run Albertina's Restaurant and Shops in the Old Kerr Nursery at NE 22nd and Glisan, as well as baking birthday cakes and helping make sure that a group home really felt like home.

Today, these volunteers are part of Albertina Kerr's Army of Angels, a community that stands together to challenge the norm and create a society that has no barriers. They are committed to ensuring that people who face mental health challenges and developmental disabilities are included and empowered and that families have reason to smile. Angels are everyday people who reach out to the most vulnerable and give back to their community.

Albertina Kerr invites everyone to become an angel – and it's easy. Eat lunch or go shopping at Albertina's Restaurant and Shops; rent a bike at Kerr Bikes on the waterfront; make a donation; take part in Albertina Kerr's Race for the Roses, Portland's best half marathon, 10K and 5K; or simply volunteer.

*To learn more about Albertina Kerr, joining the Army of Angels or resources for children and adults with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges and their families, visit [AlbertinaKerr.org](http://AlbertinaKerr.org) or call 503-239-8101.*